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ABSTRACT

With minor modifications, an advertising fundamentals course can stimulate creative development and provide career direction while it presents the basic elements of advertising. A group presentation introduces students to research and familiarizes them with the conflict resolution process useful in preparing advertising. A group project arranges students into advertising agencies competing on a "live" subject. Working on live products, ones that can be interviewed and studied and that might need an advertising program, introduces students to subject areas for potential employment, gives them experience to list on a resume, and provides a useful sample for a portfolio. In addition to the presentation and project, grades are based on an individual writing assignment and two examinations. A final review of students' work is designed to evaluate not just performance within the course but also potential within the field. Students excelling in all five assignments show both creative and scholastic strength. Those doing well in the creative components--presentation, assignment, and project--might consider copywriting, graphics, or photography as possible careers; while students with strong presentations and good examinations might look into marketing. Those students doing well in the examination only should consider areas where academic ability would be a strong asset. (A course schedule, evaluation instruments, and a sample student advertisement are appended.) (MM)

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Advertising Division

Special Topics

FUNCTIONAL ADVERTISING

Creative Structuring of an Advertising Fundamentals Course Turns It Into a "Functional Advertising" Course Which Produces Maximum Knowledge Of The Subject, Substantial Creative Development, and a Number of Other Benefits.

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by

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ABSTRACT

FUNCTIONAL ADVERTISING

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Recognizing that speech, writing and art are a process of cognition as well as its expression, a new advertising fundamentals course uses functional approach which concentrates on the process to achieve maximum creative development. Students learn the subject through routine academic activity. By means of an oral presentation, a writing assignment and a group project, they develop creative skills, become familiar with a specialty and learn how to function as part of a creative group.

At the conclusion of an advertising fundamentals course students often wonder if they should take additional courses in the subject, what courses, if they should consider advertising for a career, and if so, what part of it should they pursue.

In the past, I found a response to these questions to be somewhat troublesome in that while I had available the typical indicators, grades, I had no meaningful indicators for a career choice. Also, there were no indications of students' creative ability. A complicating factor was large classes with little opportunity to observe the students individually with the result that there was little basis upon which to offer an informed opinion.

The creative area was a matter of special concern because advertising fundamentals courses provide introduction to the subject reasonably well but do not stimulate or reward creativity. In fact, fundamentals courses are often counter-productive when the routine nature causes the creative students--artists, writers and photographers, to become bored and discouraged.

I modified a standard advertising fundamentals course so that it had a capability to develop creative skills and also to indicate areas for future study and even give a direction toward potential careers while it provided, routinely, a knowledge of the basic elements.

Quite incidentally, the modified course also offers a host of other advantages as well. It develops individual initiative and interpersonal skills and it provides a unique up-to-date orientation for all the major topics in the course and an in-depth exposure to the special-interest subjects. The objectives are achieved mainly by teaching contextually.

The students are asked to do a writing assignment individually, make a group presentation on a special-interest subject and to function as part of a group in competition with others in executing a small project as if each group

was an advertising agency.

Presentation

During the first week of class the students are familiarized with the subject by means of an overview of advertising so they can think about a topic for a presentation prior to selecting it. During the third class students are arranged into groups according to the topic selected.

The order of presentations and the method by which the students are organized into groups is important, particularly when there are large classes involved.

I list the subjects on a blackboard, place one student in charge of names in each category. Then I allow each student to pick a subject until there are five or six students in each subject category. The categories are comprised usually of research, creativity, copy, graphics, psychology, print (newspapers and magazines), broadcast (television and radio), direct mail, agency, ethics, legal, and public relations although others may be added depending on interests of the students. A detailed schedule is prepared listing the dates and the subject of the student presentations for the entire semester. (See Figure 1, Schedule.)

An important benefit of the presentation is that it introduces students to research at a very early stage. Therefore, some time is devoted to familiarizing students with research techniques and this occurs in conjunction with the student presentation on research. I emphasize library research, the necessity to survey the recent copies of trade literature, and the advantage of contacting authoritative sources in their interest area.

The conflict resolution process in developing the presentation enables students to experience the process that is useful in preparing an advertisement

and the project at a later date. Sufficient guided exposure to this process makes them better prepared to create effective advertisements but exposure to the process and the presentation also gives them a taste of what it's like to make a presentation to a client and it provides the first step toward the last course in the program--Advertising Campaigns--in which a presentation is required.

The students are evaluated for the content of the presentation and the effectiveness of the delivery. In order to provide some degree of objectivity to a very subjective evaluation, a mathematical measurement instrument, with ten items, was incorporated to generate empirical evidence. I encourage peer evaluation of the presentation primarily because the presentors get the maximum corrective benefit that way, however, I have been surprised that the peer evaluations have always been in agreement with my own. (See Figure 2, Evaluation Instrument.)

All individuals in the group receive the same grade with the exception of performance extremes. That is, if an individual was exceptionally better than the group norm, that person might receive a half grade or a grade higher.

Through the presentation technique, all subject areas are surveyed continuously for up-to-date information so the entire class has the advantage of current information in each subject.

I emphasize important items and cover any material that wasn't included during a critique at the end of the presentation or in the next class, and I exercise care to make sure that all pertinent subject matter is covered.

For the sake of conformity I schedule presentations to be delivered on a Friday. Each Friday that a presentation is scheduled, becomes a special day, with an element of excitement, an electricity in the air, similar to the opening night at a theatre, with the students, often anxious, to give the presentation

and the others looking forward to seeing it.

The presentations are scheduled to be given throughout the entire course, however, the course is organized generally into two sections. The first section includes research, creativity, psychology, copywriting, graphics and photography with the emphasis on the preparation of an advertisement, called an assignment, by each student. The second part involves a consideration of media and a study of advertising agency operations with preparation of an advertising project by a group.

Individual Assignment

As soon as the students begin to get a feel for the subject, the class selects a topic for the assignment. This is an important day because a subject must be selected that students are comfortable with. The topics are generated democratically and a list of suggestions, including the teacher's, is posted on the blackboard.

I try to keep the topics as simple as possible and make sure that the topic selected can be handled readily. The university itself is an excellent subject primarily because of the ease of research. Although the students tend to resist this subject, they are capable of handling it very well. Other good subjects include school-related topics such as funds for a new gym, the renovation of a building or improved food services. The promotion of tourism is a good subject as is the attraction of industry to an area. (See Figure 3, Student Advertisement.)

As soon as copy and art are discussed the students are encouraged to begin to develop the assignment. Hopefully, an idea may be triggered by now, particularly from the presentation on copy. Since the students bring in up-to-date samples in the presentations, the class has the advantage of a broad-based

exposure to a wide variety of current styles and new themes that might be developing so they can incorporate points demonstrated into their advertisements or even take off in new directions from that base. In other words, students see the advertising and they use the principles in application. A playful attitude toward life, a movement into health, a movement which we seem to be detecting presently toward outdoors, are all cultural trends that have been identified and used in advertising.

The assignments are evaluated according to creativity primarily but also feasibility with attention to content, clarity and correct writing. Thus the students have a chance to try their hand at an assignment and they have the opportunity to incorporate suggestions made in the assignment, when they execute the project later in the course.

A mid-term examination is given primarily to reinforce important elements but also as a device to tie together the subjects in the first section of the course. The second half concentrates on a study of media, advertising programs and agency operations.

Group Project

The students are arranged into functioning advertising agencies with attention given to balancing the capabilities of the groups so that they are as equal as possible.

One way to do this is to determine the number of graphic arts students (or those interested in graphic arts) and then make that number of agencies. I do this simply by writing numbers on a blackboard and assigning graphic art students until I have sufficient agencies for the people available.

Since the copywriters in the class are already known, as a result of the class having done the previous assignment, it is a simple matter to place one

in each agency. (I start by assigning the strongest student in the graphically weakest agency, again to balance the talents.) Then I work back again through the next highest grades until all agencies have one or two writers assigned. Then I assign the rest of the students alphabetically. In addition to arranging the students into functioning agencies, the exercise also demonstrates how to deploy talents, and human resources in general, to achieve objectives.

Next, a topic is selected for the project in the same manner as the topic was selected for the assignment. Class suggestions of a subject are considered and then the topic is selected through a class vote. I try to introduce a "live" subject for the project--one that we can study and interview and one that might need an advertising program.

This term one class is doing an advertising program for the St. Croix Winery in Prescott, Wisconsin. Other classes have done advertising programs for the City of Eau Claire, Leinenkugel's, a local brewery, Baker Cheese, a small company in St. Cloud, Wisconsin, and a number of local restaurants including the GNU Delicatessen, The Camaraderie and Stone's Throw.

A good deal of common sense must be exercised and some coordination is required by the teacher to arrange class visits by the clients and tours for the groups. The main advantage for the students is a real-life situation in a learning experience, however, there is always a possibility of a major contribution to a local firm if an effective advertising program is developed.

Although the quality of the student work is unpredictable because of the lack of experience, it is often very creative, and most clients are surprised by how much work is done and the short time in which it is completed.

The advantages of working on live products include the introduction to subject area for potential employment, the opportunity to list the experience on a resume at some time in the future, the opportunity to develop a useful

sample for a portfolio and the opportunity to prepare for future courses by actually participating in the development of a complete advertising program.

During the second half, the media is being studied with the result that the students can incorporate their topic with a media or combination of media if a multi-media campaign is appropriate as the semester progresses. Current directions in media are considered as well as the technique for developing a budget and a media plan.

Twice during the second half of the semester the groups meet in class and during this time the teacher should act as a resource person answering questions with each group. I tell the students to pay close attention to a schedule, to assign someone to be in charge, to delegate the tasks according to capability and interest, that the quality of the work will be a function of their capability and effort and to remember that this is a wide open project--they can do as little or as much as they want. The optimum would be the least amount of effort necessary to come in first, to beat the other groups and get an "A" just like the "real world" where one agency will get the account.

The projects are due three weeks before the end of the course and are evaluated primarily for creativity--a unique solution to the problem and for feasibility--a practical workable and believable advertising program. Emphasis is also placed on the completeness of the program. It should, for example, be the best solution to a problem, specify a reasonable objective and have a logical media plan and schedule. Finally, the project should also be easy to understand and aesthetically appealing.

The grading consists of five segments with a value of 20 percent for each component. The components consist of (1) the presentation, (2) the assignment, (3) the mid-term examination, (4) the group projects, and (5) the examination on the second half of the material which is given on the last day of class. After

the evaluation for each component, a computer listing of grades is provided, according to student number, with the student's performance for each component, the estimated final grade and the points short of the next grade.

The day of the final examination is devoted to a review of the students' performance, conducted informally and usually in private or in small groups.

If a student performs well in all five test categories, i.e., the presentation, the writing assignment, the group project and the two examinations, then this student is indicating strengths in the creative and scholastic components. If a student does well in the creative components, the presentation, assignment and the project, then this student might be well-advised to consider copywriting, graphics or photography as subjects for additional study and possibly a career. If a student demonstrates strength in the presentation and performs well enough in the examinations, that student might consider a career in the marketing part of the business, particularly as an account executive. And if a student performs well in the examinations only, well, there is indicated a career possibility in areas where academic capability would be a strong asset, and dependent to a greater or lesser degree on other factors such as preference for a specific subject, for example, research.

Thus, a few modifications in an advertising fundamentals course can bring large rewards in the course's ability to stimulate creative development and provide career direction. In addition, the approach seems to make it possible for our students to mature, evolve individually and to solve problems more readily than would be the case with the use of a more conventional, more prosaic approach.

Week	Class	Chapter		Subject
I	1, 2	1, 2		Overview: Advertising Today
	3	3		Select presentation subject
II	4, 5	4, 5		Develop advertisement: Meet in groups
	6	6	(1/28/83)	Group 1 (Research)
III	7, 8	11		Research: Copy Types/Format
	9	12	(2/4)	Group 2 (Creativity)
IV	10, 11	13		Dreaming (Hass):Assignment Subjects
	12		(2/11)	Group 3 (Copy)
V	13, 14	14		Writing: Editing
	15	15	(2/18)	Group 4 (Graphics)
VI	16, 17	9		Graphics: Photo Styles I and II (Assignment Due)
	18	10	(2/25)	Group 5 (Psychology)
VII	19, 20	7		Review Assignments: Exam
	21	8	(3/4)	Review Exam
VIII	22, 23	16		AAF/Coors: Retail Advertising
	24		(3/11)	Arrange Agency Groups
IX	25, 26	17		Assign Projects: Newspaper Creativity
	27		(3/18)	Group 6 (Print)
X	28, 29	18		Direct Mail: Radio
	30	19	(3/25)	Group 7 (Broadcast)
XI	SPRING RECESS			
XII	Easter Recess, 31, 32	20	(4/8)	Radio Commercials: Television CLIO I
XIII	33, 34	22		CLIO II: Comparative Advertising (Tape)
	35		(4/15)	Group 8 (Agency)
XIV	36, 37	21		Agency: Media Plan/Budget
	38	28	(4/22)	Group 9 (Ethics/Legal)
XV	39, 40	23, 24		Ethics: Legal
	41	25	(4/29)	(Project Due)
XVI	42, 43	26, 27		Review Projects: CLIO 1982
	44	29	(5/6)	Group 10 (PR)
XVII	45, 46	N/A		Public Relations: Careers/Salaries
	47		(5/13)	Exam

Figure 1, Schedule

GROUP/SUBJECT: _____

1. Content:

Not informative	1 2 3 4 5 6	Very informative
Too simple	1 2 3 4 5 6	Detailed sufficiently
Poorly organized	1 2 3 4 5 6	Well organized
I don't understand	1 2 3 4 5 6	I understand clearly
Not useful	1 2 3 4 5 6	Very helpful

2. Delivery:

Pace is too slow	1 2 3 4 5 6	Excellent pace
Voice was not clear	1 2 3 4 5 6	Voice was very clear
Dull	1 2 3 4 5 6	Enthusiastic
Unprepared	1 2 3 4 5 6	Very well prepared
Uninteresting	1 2 3 4 5 6	Compelling

3. Scale:

1	1.4	2.1	2	2.8	3	3.5	4.2	4	4.9	5	5.6	6
C-	C		C+		B-		B		B+		A-	A
72	75		77		82		85		87		90	92

Figure 2, Evaluation Instrument

Name: Marijo T. Kaiser

Client: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Media: The New Yorker; February 2, 1982; full page, full color.

Graphics: Winter Scene: In the evening, a crisp, cold evening; with ice, snow, lights and some people in the background; around 9 or 10 p.m.; possibly from the footbridge (or a lower angle out on the river); with Hilltop and the dormitories in the far background.

Copy: "These things will not pass away... They will live as long as this land of Wisconsin --- its forests and its mighty rivers. They live on in your memories --- memories of friends and teachers, of laboratories and books, of warm spring afternoons, of radiant colors of autumn, of icy winds and sparkling snows --- memories, too of new insights, new hopes, new aspirations, of all that make life rich and rewarding."

John C. Weaver, former President of the University of Wisconsin System

Signature: (Excellence Symbol)

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Figure 3, Student Advertisement